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Everything You Need To Know About Istria

Posted by [Forbes Travel Guide Correspondent Marcy Gordon](#)

April 22nd, 2013 06:39 AM



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Istria, located in the northwest corner of Croatia, is the largest peninsula in the Adriatic. With pristine beaches, small coastal villages and dramatic inland hilltop towns, the region is rich with gastronomic delights from plentiful seafood and wild asparagus to world-class truffles and olive oils. Plus, it's home to an emerging world-class wine scene. For your next trip to the region, we've gathered some of the best places to eat, drink and stay.

Where to Eat

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Restaurant Zigante

Istria's premier truffle restaurant is in the village of Livade, near where the world's largest truffle (1.31 kg) was discovered in 1999. Signature dishes include marinated baby beef steak served on wild rucola, sprinkled with olive oil and shaved fresh black truffle and homemade pasta with white truffle. Brace yourself for the decadent finale — truffle ice cream.

Konoba Puli Pinetq

Tucked away on the outskirts of Žminj, Chef Pino Kuhar specializes in traditional Istrian country-style cooking. Many of the rustic dishes are cooked tableside in the open fire. If nothing else, try the hearty Istrain "soup" called Supa (made of toast, red wine, olive oil and sugar), which is served in a wide-mouthed crockery pitcher called a bukaleta.

Konoba Batelina

Located in Banjole, Konoba Batelina is hailed as Istria's best seafood restaurant. Here you will find Chef David Skoko creating remarkable combinations of flavor and texture. Standouts include the conga eel paste with marinated anchovies, shark liver pâté with onion marmalade and pasta with tuna bottarga. Desserts are brilliant, too. Warm chocolate muffins with chili drizzled with local olive oil or the figs in red wine with mascarpone cream are two must-haves.

Where to Drink

Valentino Champagne and Cocktail Bar

This is the place to see and be seen in the city of Rovinj. Sip libations such as refreshing Mojitos and Cosmopolitans seaside at small tables or sit directly on the rocks upon thick cushions and watch the sunset. After dusk, underwater spotlights create a magical glow and illuminate the curious fish.

Piquentum

Just outside Buzet and inside a Mussolini-era water cistern, this mini-winery is dark and bunker like, but the exceptional Teran, Refošk and Malvazija made by Dimitri Brečević, shine bright.

Kozlović

Modern architecture, stunning views, and a happening scene in the summer make this winery in Momjan most appealing. If you like crisp whites, try the Valle blanc and the single vineyard Santa Lucia blanc.

Cattunar

On a clear day, you can see the Adriatic from Cattunar in Brtonigla. One of the largest wineries in the region, they make a wine for every palate, from traditional Malvazija istarska and Teran to Cabernet Sauvignon.

Where to Stay

Hotel San Rocco

One of the finest boutique hotels in Croatia, this family run lodge has it all: spacious guest rooms, impeccable service, spa and wellness services, outdoor pool, rustic surroundings and one of the best restaurants in Brtonigla. The outstanding dining program features estate-made olive oil and local truffles. Depending on the season, try the baked Adriatic squid with barley and black truffle or the homemade Ravioli with crab and cream of wild asparagus. Wine lovers will appreciate owner Tuillo Fernetich's well-stocked cellar.

Stancija Meneghetti



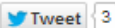
Once you arrive, you won't want to leave this secluded villa just minutes from the sea in Bale. The elegant and private retreat situated between acres of olive trees and vineyards has both indoor and outdoor pools, an on-site winery and in-house chef preparing visually mind-boggling creations such as deconstructed crab salad presented with porcelain spoons containing crab eggs, crab meat and parsley that you shake together in a glass orb. Meals are paired with estate-made vinos including the Meneghetti Classic, one of the best sparkling wines made in Istria.

Hotel Lone

Only a short walk or bike ride from Rovinj, the ultra-modern Hotel Lone is a visual feast of design with undulating balconies and a soaring atrium lobby. Designed by Croatian architect Silvije Novak, the interior spaces feel both open and intimate with a deep connection to nature. The fine-dining restaurant called 'L,' presents a modern spin on traditional Croatian cuisine with selections such as scallops with hazelnut crust and truffle vinaigrette and spinach cream soup with macadamia nut oil, sautéed tofu and crispy rice noodles. Staff sommeliers are at the ready to assist with wine pairings.

Photos Courtesy of Markus Bernet and Marcy Gordon

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